The Language of the Friday Khutbah

By Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani

Preface

In substantial number of mosques in different parts of USA and some other western countries the Khutbah of Friday is delivered in English or other local languages. My respected brother Dr. Muhammad Ismail Madani asked me to explain the correct Shari'ah position about the language of the *Khutbah*. Certain articles have appeared in Urdu for the purpose but the English knowing people cannot benefit from them, therefore, it was suggested by my learned brother that I should write an article in English. The present booklet is meant to fulfill this need and I hope that it will clarify doubts on the subject. I would request the readers to consider the points raised in this article with an impartial and unbaised approach because the matter relates to a very important Islamic mode of worship. May Allah guide us to the straight path according to His own pleasure.

Muhammad Taqi Usmani

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمدلله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على رسوله
الكريم، وعلى آله واصحابه اجمعين، وعلى كل من
تبعهم باحسان الى يوم الدين

It is one of the basic requirements of the Friday prayer that it should be preceded by a Khutbah (sermon) delivered by the Imam. It is *Wajib* (mandatory) for every Muslim to attend the Khutbah from the very beginning. Being a part of the Jumu'ah prayer; it has some special rules and traits which distinguish it from the normal lectures given on other occasions. One of these special traits is that like the prayer (Salah) it is delivered in Arabic. All the Muslims have been delivering the Khutbah of Friday in no other language than Arabic, even where the audience does not understand its meaning. It was in the present century for the first

time that the idea of delivering the Khutbah in other languages emerged in some Muslim societies where majority of the audience could not understand Arabic properly. The intention behind this change was that without letting the people understand its contents, the Khutbah can hardly be of a meaningful use for the general people who are addressed by it. Conversely, if Khutbah is delivered in a local language, a very useful message can be conveyed through it every Friday and it can serve as an effective medium for educating people in a wide area of Islamic teachings.

Apparently, the argument seems to be very logical. That is why it has found currency in the countries far from the centers of deeper Islamic knowledge. But before we accept it on its face value, we should first examine it in. the light of the Holy Qur'an, the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم , the practice of his companions and the juristic views adopted by different schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

It is true that Islam being a universal religion, does not want to restrict it to a particular race or language. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned in express terms:

و ما ارسلنا من رسول الا بلسان قومه

"We never sent, a messenger but in the language of the nation he was sent to".

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم was so keen to convey the Islamic message to all foreign nations in their own languages that he sent some of his companions, like Zayd ibn Harithah **رضى الله عنه** to Syria to learn the Hebrew and the Syriac languages, so that he may preach Islam to the nations who did not know Arabic.

But at the same time, we notice that while leaving a wide spectrum of education and preaching open to any language convenient for the purpose, Islam has specified some limited functions to be performed in Arabic only. For example, it is mandatory for every Muslim to perform his five times prayers (Salah) in Arabic. This rule applies to all non-Arabs also who cannot normally understand what they are reciting, rather, sometimes it is difficult for them to learn the exact pronunciation of the Arabic words used in the prayers. Likewise, *Adhan* is the call for attending the congregation of Salah. It is addressed to the local people. But it is made obligatory that it is pronounced in Arabic. Its translation

into any other language is not acceptable. Similarly, while performing Hajj we are directed to read *talbiyah* (لبيك اللهمّ لبيك) in Arabic. The translation of these words cannot serve the purpose. While greeting each other, we are obligated to say "السلام عليكم" in the exact Arabic words. "Peace Upon You" an exact translation of "السلام عليكم" cannot fulfill the requirement of the recognized (*masnoon*) greeting even though the former expression is more comprehensible for an English knowing person than the latter. Similarly, while commencing an important work it is desirable to say "**بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم** ". These specific Arabic words may be translated into English or any other language easily understood by the speaker and the addressee but it will always be preferable to recite the original Arabic words.

The emphasis on exact Arabic words in some such matters is not based on any bias in favor of the Arabic language, because Islam has always been proponent of inter-nationalism rather than nationalism. The Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه و سلم has himself eradicated the prides based on race, color and language. He announced in his landmark sermon of his last Hajj that:

لا فضل لعربی علی عجمی

"An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab".

However, for being an internationally united *ummah*, the Muslim should have some common features, specially in the ways of their worship. The modes of worship which require some oral recitations have, therefore, been prescribed in a manner that all recitations are carried out in one common language, regardless of the linguistic affiliation of the recitors. Arabic has been selected for this purpose, because it is the language in which Qur'an was revealed and in which the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه و سلم addressed the humankind. The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه و سلم have been taken as the basic resources from where the rules of Shari'ah are deduced. Both being in Arabic, it is always desirable that a Muslim acquaints himself with it to the best possible extent. To make Arabic a common medium of expression for all Muslims, at least in the ritual recitings, serves this purpose also. When a non-Arab Muslim performs prayer in Arabic five times a day , he automatically establishes a strong relationship with the Qur'anic language which makes him understand a number of the terms and phrases used in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah.

In short, it is enjoined upon the Muslims in some modes of worship that their oral recitations must be in Arabic. Therefore, to resolve the issue of the language of Khutbah we will have to examine whether the Khutbah of Friday is a form of worship or it is an ordinary lecture meant only to educate people.

The following points may help knowing the correct position in this respect:

1. It is established by authentic resources that the Khutbah of Friday is a part of the prayer and stands for two *Rak`at* of prayer. Every day, other than Friday, the prayer of *zuhr* consist of four *Rak`ats*, while on Friday the number of *Rak`at* of the *Jumu`ah* prayer has been reduced to two, and the other two *Rak`ats* have been substituted by the *Khutbah*. Sayyidna Umar ,**رضى الله عنه**, the second caliph of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم says:

انما جعلت الخطبة موضع الركعتين، من فاتته الخطبة
صلى اربعا

The *Khutbah* has been prescribed in lieu of two *rakats*. Whosoever fails to deliver Khutbah must pray four *rakat*.

2. The Holy Qur'an has named the *Khutbah* as *Dhikr* in the following verse:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ إِذَا نُودِىَ لِلصَّلَوٰةِ مِن يَوْمِ ٱلْجُمُعَةِ فَٱسْعَوْا۟ إِلَىٰ
ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ وَذَرُوا۟ ٱلْبَيْعَ

"O! believers, when there is a call for Salah on Friday, rush for the Dhikr of Allah and leave trade".
(al-Jumu'ah: 9)

Here the word '*Dhikr*' stands for the Khutbah, because after hearing the *Adhan*, the Salah (prayer) does not start immediately. What starts after *Adhan* is Khutbah. That is why the Holy Qur'an did not say, 'When there is a call for prayer, rush for the prayer", rather it has said, "when there is a call for prayer, rush for the *Dhikr* of Allah. It is for this reason that all the Muslim schools of jurists are unanimous on the point that it is

necessary upon every Muslim to set out for the *Masjid* as soon as he hears the call and should reach the *Masjid* at a time when the Khutbah is yet to start because hearing the full *Khutbah* is *wajib* (mandatory).

This is sufficient to prove that the Holy Qur'an has used the word '*Dhikr*' for the Khutbah. *Dhikr* means 'recitation of the name of Allah' as against '*Tadhkir*' which means 'giving advice', 'to educate' or 'to admonish'. This is a clear indication from the Holy Qur'an that the basic purpose of *Khutbah* is *Dhikr* and not the *Tadhkir* and that it is a part of the worship rather than being a normal lecture.

3. At another place, the Holy Qur'an has referred to the *Khutbah* of Friday as "the recitation of the Holy Qur'an". The Holy verse says:

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ فَٱسْتَمِعُوا۟ لَهُۥ وَأَنصِتُوا۟ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

"And when the Qur'an is recited before you, listen to it carefully and be silent, so that you receive mercy".
(al-Arafat: 204)

According to a large number of commentators the recitation of the Qur'an in this verse refers to the *Khutbah* delivered before the prayer of *Jumu`ah*. Here again the word of recitation is used for the *Khutbah* which indicates that it is very similar to the recitation of Qur'anic verses during performing prayers.

In a number of authentic Ahadith also, the *Khutbah* of Friday has been referred to as *Dhikr*. For example in a Hadith reported by Imam al-Bukhari the Holy Prophet سلم صلى الله عليه و , while persuading Muslims to go to the Masjid on Friday at the earliest, has said:

فاذا خرج الامام حضرت الملائكة يستمعون الذكر

"Because when the Imam comes out (to deliver Khutbah) the angels come to listen to the Dhikr".
(Sahib al-Bukhari v. 1, p. 121)

In another narration, the same principle has been established in the following words:

فاذا خرج الامام طووا صحفهم وليستمعون الذكر

"Because when imam comes out (for Khutbah) the angels close their books (recording the noble deeds) and listen to the Dhikr (i.e. Khutbah)". (Sahih al-Bukhari V.1, p. 127)

Based on this particular characteristic of the *Khutbah* of Friday it is admittedly subject to certain rules which are not applicable to normal religious lectures. Some of these rules are the following:

(i) It is a mandatory requirement for a valid Khutbah on Friday to contain at least one verse from, the Holy Qur'an without which the Khutbah is not valid, while in normal lectures no recitation from the Holy Qur'an is necessary.

(ii) Another mandatory rule is that it must contain some words in praise of Allah Almighty and for sending *Salah* (durood) to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم while no such requirement is mandatory in the case of normal lectures.

(iii) The *Khutbah* being a part of the prayer no one from the audience is allowed to utter a single word during *Khutbah*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم has emphasized on this principle in the following words:

اذا تكلمت يوم الجمعة فقد لغوت

"If you speak during Khutbah on Friday, you commit absurdity."

قال يوم الجمعة والإمام يخطب أنصت فقد لغا (صحيح البخاري، الجمعة ٨٨٢، مسلم الجمعة ١٤٠٤، ترمذي الجمعة ٤٧٠، النسائي، الجمعة ١٣٨٤)

"Whoever says to his friend while Imam is delivering Khutbah on Friday 'keep quiet' commits absurdity."

It is obvious that the words 'keep quiet' do not disturb the *Khutbah*, nor do they stop one from hearing its contents. Rather, they may induce others to maintain silence. Still, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم has forbidden to utter these words during the *Khutbah* of Friday. The reason is that the Khutbah of Friday enjoys the same status as the Salah itself. While offering Salah, one cannot even say, 'keep quiet' to

stop someone from speaking. Similar rule has been applied to Khutbah also, which is another indication that the Khutbah of Friday is not like a normal lecture. It is a part of Salah, therefore, most of the rules applicable to Salah are also applicable to it.

4. The Khutbah has been held as a prerequisite for the Friday prayer. No Friday prayer is valid without a Khutbah. All the Muslim jurists are unanimous on this point. Had it beers a normal lecture for the purpose of preaching, it would have nothing to do with the validity of the *Jumu`ah* prayer.

5. It is admitted by all that the *Khutbah* must be delivered after the commencement of the prescribed time of Jumu'ah prayer. If the Khutbah is delivered before the .prescribed time it is not valid, even if the prayer is offered within the prescribed time. In this case, both the *Khutbah* and the prayer will have to be I repeated. (al-Bahr al-Ra'iq v. 2 p. 158)

If the purpose of the Khutbah is nothing but preaching or education, it should have been acceptable Jumu'ah prayer and the prayer is offered after the commencement of the prescribed time. This strictness about the time of the *Khutbah* further confirms that it is a part of the Salah and is subject to the similar rules as rules provided for Salah..

6. If the Imam confines himself to the hamd (praising Allah) and Salah (Durood) for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم and to reciting some verses from the Holy Qur'an, and making some Du'a (supplication) and does not utter a single word to preach or to educate people, the Khutbah is held to be valid and the Salah of Jumu`ah can be offered after that. Had the purpose been to educate people, it would have been the main ingredient of the *Khutbah* to say at least a few words for this purpose without which it should not have been a valid *Khutbah*. But it has been held valid even without the words of preaching or educating. Sayyidna Uthman رضى الله عنه delivered his first *Khutbah* (after he assumed the charge of *Khilafat*) exactly in this fashion and did not say a single word for the purpose of preaching. Still his *Khutbah* was held as valid. It was in the presence of the Sahabah رضى الله عنهم but no one from them challenged the validity of such a *Khutbah*.

This is again a clear proof of the fact that the basic purpose of the *Khutbah* is *Dhikr* and not *Tadhkir*. Being a part of the *Jumu'ah* prayer, it

is a form of worship and not basically a method of preaching and education.

All these points go a long way to prove that, unlike normal lectures or sermons, certain rules peculiar to Salah have been prescribed for the *Khutbah* of *Jumu'ah*. It is in this context that it has been held necessary that it should be delivered in Arabic only. Just as Salah cannot be performed in any language other than Arabic the *Khutbah* of *Jumu'ah* too, cannot be delivered in any other language. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم never tried to direct his companions to deliver the *Khutbah* in the local language where the audience could not understand Arabic. Even the audience of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم sometimes included non-Arabs, but' he never tried to get his *Khutbah* translated by an interpreter like he did while he spoke to foreign delegations.

After the demise of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم the noble companions conquered a vast area of the globe. Even in the days of Sayyidna Umar رضى الله عنه the whole Persia and a major part of the Roman Empire was brought under the Muslim rule, and thousands of non-Arab people embraced Islam, so much so that. the majority of the Muslims living in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Egypt were non-Arabs. These new converts were in desperate need of being educated in their own language, so that they may acquire proper knowledge of the basic Islamic rules and principles. It was not the age of printing, publishing and modern audio-visual instruments, therefore, the
only source of acquiring knowledge was the personal contact. Still, the companions of the Holy
Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم never thought about delivering the Friday Khutbah in the local languages, nor did they ever arrange for an interpreter to get it translated simultaneously. One cannot argue that the Sahabah could not speak the local languages, because a large number of them, was either non-Arab by origin, like Salman al-Farisi, Suhayb al-Rumi, Bilal al-Habashi رضى الله عنهم اجمعين or has, learnt the local languages, like Zayd bin Harithahرضى الله عنه . It was universally accepted that, like the Salah and *Adhan*, the *Khutbah* of Friday must be delivered in Arabic, and it is not permissible to deliver it in any other language, even when the audience are not able to understand Arabic, because it is basically a form o *Dhikr* or worship, and not a source of education. If the audience understand Arabic, it can also serve a

secondary purpose of educating them, but it is not the basic ingredient or the exclusive objective of Khutbah.

The Rulings of the recognized jurists:

This position is unanimously held by all the four schools of the Islamic jurisprudence. Their specific rulings are reproduced below:

Maliki School

The Maliki scholars are very specific in declaring this rule. Al-Dasuqi, the well-known Maliki jurist, writes:

(وكونها عربية) أى ولو كان الجماعة عجمالا يعرفون
العربية، فلوكان ليس فيهم من يحسن الاتيان بالخطبة
عربية لم يلزمهم جمعة . (حاشية الدسوقى على الشرح
الكبير ١:٣٧٨)

"And it is a condition for the validity of Jumu'ah that the Khutbah is delivered in Arabic, even though the people are non-Arabs and do not know the Arabic language. Therefore, if there is nobody who can deliver Khutbah in Arabic properly, the prayer of Jumu'ah is not obligatory on them (in which case they will offer the zuhr prayer)".

In *Minah-al Jalil*, another recognized book of Maliki jurisprudence, the principle has been mentioned in a greater detail:

وبخطبتين قبل الصلاة .... وكونها عربيتين،
والجهر بهما، ولو كان الجماعة عجما لايعرفون اللغة
العربية، اوصمًا، فان لم يوجد فيهم من يحسنهما
عربيتين فلا تجب الجمعة عليهم، ولو كانوا كلهم بكما
فلا تجب عليهم الجمعة . (منح الجليل على شرح مختصر خليل
١:٢٦)

"And two Khutbahs are necessary before Salah, and it is a condition that both of them are in Arabic, and are delivered aloud, even though the audience are non-Arabs or are dumb. If no one is found who can deliver them in Arabic then the Jumu`ah prayer is not obligatory on such

people. Similarly, if all of them are deaf, no Jumu'ah is obligatory on them.

Al-Hattab, the most quoted Maliki jurist, writes in this *Jawahir-al-iklil*:

فلو خطب بعد الصلاة أعاد الصلاة عقب الخطبة ان
قرب، وإلا استأ نفهما، لأن شرطها اتصال الصلاة
بهما، وكونها عربيتين، ولوكان الجماعة عجمًا لا
يعرفون اللغة العربية (جواهر الا كليل، لحطاب ١:٩٥)

"So, if the Imam delivered the Khutbah after Salah, it is, necessary that he performs Salah again immediately after the Khutbah, otherwise (if considerable time has passed after the Khutbah, both Khutbah and Salah should be performed again, because it is a condition for the validity of Jumu'ah prayer that both the Khutbahs are followed immediately by Salah, and that both of them are delivered in Arabic, even though the people are non-Arabs who do not understand Arabic".

Al-Adawi, another Maliki jurist, mentions the principle in the following words:

لا بل ان تكون بالعربية) فوقوعها بغير العربية لغو،
فان لم يكن فى الجماعة من يعرف العربية والخطيب
يعرفها وجبت، فان لم يعرف الخطيب عربية لم تجب .
(العدوى بهامش الخرشى على مختصر خليل ٢:٢٨)

"It is necessary that the Khutbah is in Arabic. Therefore, the Khutbah delivered in any other language is void. If no one from the people knows 'Arabic, and the Imam knows it, the Ummah is obligatory but if the Imam does not know Arabic, the obligation of Jumu'ah prayer is no more effective".

The same principle has been established by all the recognized books of Maliki jurisprudence.

Shafii School

Similar principle has been accepted by the Shaffi jurists also. Al-Ramli is one of the famous Shafii jurists of the later days who has been relied upon by the Muftis of Shafii school. He writes:

(ويشترط كونها عربية) لاتباع السلف والخلف،
وتعلمها فرض كفاية، فيكفى فى تعلمها واحد منهم
كماهو شأن فروض الكفاية، فان لم يفعل واحد منهم
عصوا، ولا جمعة لهم بل يصلون الظهر بلُغته، وإن لم
يفهمه القوم فان قيل: ما فائدة الخطبة بالعربية اذا لم
يفهمها القوم، أجيب بأن فائدتها العلم بالوعظ من
حيث الجملة فقد صرحوا فيما اذا سمعوا الخطبة ولم
يفهموا معناها انها تصح . (زادالمحتاج بشرح المنهاج ١:٣٢٧ و
٣٢٨)

"And it is a condition (for the validity of Khutbah) that it is delivered in Arabic. This is to follow the way of the Sahabah and their decedants. And to learn Arabic (for the purpose of delivering Khutbah) is Fard al-Kifayah, therefore, it is sufficient that at least one man learns it... But if no one learns it, all of them will be sinful and their Jumu'ah prayer will not be acceptable. Instead, they will have to perform zuhr prayer. However, if it is not at all possible (due t o short time) that the Arabic is learnt, then it is permissible that the Imam delivers Khutbah in his own language, even though the people do not understand it... If somebody raises the question as to what purpose can be served by the Khutbah when it is not understood by the people, our answer would be that the purpose is served when the people merely know that the Khutbah is being delivered, because it is expressedly mentioned that if the audience listen to the Khutbah and do not understand its meaning, it is still a valid Khutbah."

The same rulings are given in other recognized books of Shafii school also

(الغاية القصوى فى دراية الفتوى ١:٣٤، واعانة الطالبين
فى حل الفاظ فتح المعين ٢:٦٨)

Hambali School

The Hambali school is no different from the main stream of the Muslim scholars. They too are of the belief that the Khutbah must be delivered in Arabic. However, they say that if nobody is found who can deliver it in Arabic, then in that case only the Khutbah may be delivered in some other language. But so far as there is a single person who can speak Arabic, it is necessary that he delivers it in Arabic, even though the audience do not understand its meanings. Al-Buhooti, the renowned jurist of the Hambali School, writes:

ولا تصح الخطبة بغير العربية مع القدرة عليها بالعربية،
كقراءة، فانها لا تجزئ بغير العربية .... وتصح الخطبة
بغير العربية مع العجز عنها بالعربية .... غير القراءة
فلا تجزئ بغير العربية، فان عجز عنها أى عن االقراءة
وجب بدلها ذكر . (كشاف القناع للبهوتى ٢:٣٧)

"And the Khutbah is not valid if it is delivered in any language other than Arabic when somebody is able to deliver it in Arabic. It is like the recitation of the Holy Qur'an (in prayer) which cannot be done in a non-Arab language. However, the Khutbah in any other language is valid only if nobody can deliver it in Arabic. Nevertheless, the recitation of the Holy Qur'an (as a part of the Khutbah) is not valid except in Arabic. If somebody cannot recite in Arabic, it is obligatory on him to recite a Dhikr instead of a verse of the Holy Qur'an, like in Salah (the person who cannot recite the Qur'anic verses is required to make Dhikr)."

The same rules are also mentioned in other books of the Hambali school.
(See for example: 2:113 الفروع لابن مفلح كتاب)

Hanafi School

The Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence also agrees with the former three schools in the principle that the Friday Khutbah should be delivered in Arabic and it is not permissible to deliver it in any other language. However, there is a slight difference of opinion about some details of this principle. Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad, the two pupils of Imam Abu Hanifah are of the view that a non-Arabic Khutbah is not acceptable in the sense that it cannot fulfill the

requirement of Jumu'ah prayer, therefore, no Jumu`ah prayer can be offered after it. Rather, the *Khutbah* must be delivered again in Arabic without which the following Jumu'ah prayer will not be valid. However, if no one from the community is able to deliver an Arabic Khutbah, then only in that case a non-Arabic Khutbah may fulfill the requirement based on the doctrine of necessity. The view of Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad, in this respect, is close to the views of Imam Shafii and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal.

Imam Abu Hanifah, on the other hand, says that although it is Makrooh (impermissible) to deliver Khutbah in a non-Arab language yet if someone violates this principle and delivers it in any other language, then the requirement of Khutbah will be held as fulfilled and the *Jumu`ah* prayer offered after it will be valid.

Some people misunderstood the position of Imam Abu Hanifah in this matter from two different angels:

Firstly, some writers claim that this view represents the earlier position of Imam Abu Hanifah and he had, later on, withdrawn from it and had concurred to the view of his two pupils.

This statement is not correct. In fact, there are two separate issues which should not be confused. One issue is whether or not the recitation of the Holy Qur'an in a non-Arabic language is acceptable. It is with regard to this issue that Imam Abu Hanifah had an earlier view which accepted the recitation even in a non-Arab language, but later on, he recalled this view and concurred with the view of his two pupils and all other jurists who do not hold any recitation of Qur'an during Salah as valid unless it is in the original Arabic language. It is now settled with consensus and Imam Abu Hanifah does no longer differ from this unanimous position of the Muslim jurists.

The second issue relates to the *Khutbah* of Friday and to some other *Adhkar* of *Salah* like الله اكبر etc. This issue is still a matter of difference between Imam Abu Hanifah and other jurists including Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad who are of the view that the Khutbah in a non-Arabic language is not at all acceptable, and no Jumu'ah prayer is valid after such a Khutbah, while Imam Abu Hanifah says that, despite being *Makrooh*, a non-Arabic *Khutbah* is recognized to the extent that it validates the *Jumu`ah* prayer performed after it. This view of Imam Abu Hanifah still holds good and he did never resile from it. (راجع رد المحتار)

The second misconception with regard to the position of Imam Abu Hanifah in the issue of *Khutbah* is that some people have misinterpreted his view to say that a non-Arabic Khutbah is quite permissible according to Imam Abu Hanifah.

This is again a wrong statement. Imam Abu Hanifah does not hold it quite permissible to deliver *Khutbah* in a non-Arabic language. He holds it "*Makrooh Tahreeman*", a term almost analogous to 'impermissible', which means that it is not allowed to deliver Khutbah in a language other than Arabic. However, if somebody commits this *Makrooh* (impermissible) act, his Khutbah will not be deemed as void, and the Jumu'ah prayer performed after it will be valid.

To properly understand his position, one must recall that the Khutbah is a condition precedent to the validity of Jumu`ah prayer. Without *Khutbah*, *Jumu`ah* prayer is void. Now most of the jurists, including Imam Abu Yousuf and Imam Muhammad are of the opinion that a non-Arabic Khutbah is not acceptable at all. If somebody delivers it in a non-Arabic language it can never be held as a *Khutbah* of Friday, therefore, it will not fulfill the condition of *Jumu'ah* prayer and no *Jumu'ah* prayer can be performed after it unless an Arabic *Khutbah* is delivered again.

Imam Abu Hanifah differs from them in this aspect only. He says that admittedly, a non-Arabic *Khutbah* is *Makrooh* or impermissible, yet the non-Arabic language does not render it as void. Therefore, it can be used for fulfilling the condition of the *Jumu'ah* prayer. Therefore, the people who attend such a *Khutbah* can participate in the Jumu'ah prayer and the obligation of Jumu'ah will be held as discharged.

It is thus evident that all the four recognized schools of Islamic Fiqh are unanimous on the point that the Khutbah must be delivered in Arabic. The Maliki jurists have gone to the extent that if no Arabic-knowing person is available for delivering *Khutbah*, the Jumu'ah is converted into *Zuhr* prayer. The Shafii jurists say that in this case the Muslims are under an obligation to appoint someone to learn as much Arabic words as may be sufficient to articulate a shortest possible Khutbah. However, if the time is too short to learn, then the Khutbah may be delivered in any other possible language. Similar is the view of the Hanbali jurists who insist that in this case the Imam may confine himself to the short words of *Dhikr*
like سبحان الله or الحمدلله.

(الفتاوى الهندية 1:146)

This being allowed,. he need not resort to delivering *Khutbah* in any other language.

This analysis would show that the exceptions conceded by the Shafii or Hanbali schools relate to the rare situation where nobody is able to utter a few words in Arabic. This situation is similar to a situation where a person embraces Islam and does not find time to learn the basic ingredients of Salah in which case he is allowed to utter a few words of Dhikr in whatever manner he can. Obviously, the rule governing this rare phenomenon cannot be applied to the normal situations where *Khutbah* can be delivered in Arabic.

It must be noted here that all those who have allowed some exceptions to the general rule have done so only when a capable person to deliver Arabic *Khutbah* is not available. But no jurist has ever allowed such a concession to a situation where such a capable person is available but the audience do not understand Arabic. Conversely, each one of them has clearly mentioned that the rule will remain effective even when the audience do not understand the meaning of *Khutbah*.

It should be remembered that all these juristic rulings were given at a time when Islam had spread all over the world, and the Muslim community was not confined to the Arabian Peninsula; rather Millions of the Muslims belonged to non-Arab countries who did not know Arabic. In the beginning of the Islamic history even Syria, Iraq, Egypt and other Northern countries of Africa were non-Arabs. Their residents did not know Arabic. Moreover, Iran, India, Turkey, China and all the Eastern Muslim countries are still non-Arabs and very few of their residents know Arabic. The need for their Islamic education was too obvious to be doubted. *Khutbah* to use it as a source of education. Evidently, the jurists quoted above were not unaware of the need to educate the common people, nor were they heedless to the basic requirements of the community. Still, their consistent practice throughout centuries was that the *Khutbah* of *Jumu'ah* was always delivered in Arabic. No one from the non-Arab audience has ever raised objection against it, nor did the leaders of the Muslim -thought ever try to change its language. They knew that there are many other occasions to deliver lectures in the local language to educate people, but the *Khutbah* of Friday, like Salah, has some peculiar characteristics, which should not be disturbed.

In order to benefit from the congregation of Friday and to use this occasion for educating common people, the non-Arab Muslim communities started a lecture in the local language before the second *Adhan* or after the Jumu'ah prayer. For centuries the Muslims in India, Pakistan, China and the countries of Central Asia arrange for a general lecture in the local language before the second *Adhan* of Jumu'ah. But after the second *Adhan* the Arabic *Khutbah* is delivered followed by the *Jumu'ah* prayer. In some places, the lecture in the local language is arranged after the *Jumu`ah* prayer is over. Through this practice, the non-Arab Muslims have on the one hand, preserved the distinct characteristics of the *Khutbah* and maintained the consistent practice of the Ummah and on the other hand, they have availed of this opportunity for educating the common people also.

Some people raise two objections against this practice. First, with regard to its acceptability from the Shari'ah point of view, and second, with reference to its practical aspect. The first objection is that the lecture in the local language is an addition to the recognized components of the *Jumu'ah* congregation. It is tantamount to raising the number of *Khutbah* from two to three. According to them, this kind of addition should be regarded as *'bidah'* (an innovation) because it has no precedent in the practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ و سلم or his noble companions. This objection, however, is not valid for two reasons:

Firstly, it is not correct to term every new practice as *'bidah'*. In fact, a new practice becomes *'bidah'* only when it is taken to be a part of the ritual practices, or is held to be wajib (obligatory) or masnoon (a practice prescribed by the Holy
Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ و سلم. If a new practice is adopted simply for the sake of convenience arid neither it is held as obligatory, nor masnoon, and nobody is compelled to follow it, nor a person is blamed for avoiding it, rather it is taken to be mubah (permissible), then such a practice cannot be held as *'bidah'*. For example building of minarets or domes over the mosque is a new practice which did not exist in the days of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ و سلم , but it has never been termed as *'bidah'* for the simple reason that this practice is not taken to be wajib or masnoon. Nobody has ever thought that it is necessary for a mosque to have minarets and domes, or that a mosque without domes and minarets is not a Masjid. This practice has been adopted for the sake of convenience only, therefore, it is not a bidah or a prohibited innovation in religion. Similarly, a lecture before the second Adhan of Jumu'ah, in

whatever language it may be, is not a *bidah*, because nobody deems it a part of the *Jumu`ah* prayer, nor is it held to be wajib or masnoon. It has been adopted for the sake of convenience and no one is compelled to deliver it, nor to attend it. If no such lecture is delivered, nobody believes that the *Jumu`ah* congregation is deficient or incomplete. Therefore, this additional lecture cannot be held as *bidah*, even though it is presumed that it is a new practice adopted by the Muslims of later days.

Secondly, it is not correct to assume that this additional lecture has no precedent in the earlier days of the Islamic history. In fact, it is reported by several authentic sources that Sayyidna Umar رضى الله عنه had permitted Sayyidna Tamim al-Dari رضى الله عنه to give a lecture sermon in the masjid before Sayyidna Umar رضى الله عنه comes out to deliver the *Khutbah* of Friday. This practice of Sayyidna Umar رضى الله عنه reveals two points; firstly, that such an additional lecture is permissible, anal secondly that this additional lecture is meant exclusively to educate people, while the formal Friday *Khutbah* has other elements, otherwise it was needless to have an additional lecture for education while both were in Arabic.

The second objection against this practice is that it is not feasible, specially in the countries where Friday is not observed as a weekly holiday. In such countries the people come to attend the *Jumu`ah* prayer from their working places and have to go back to their work in a shortest possible time. Therefore, it is difficult for them to attend an additional lecture before the Khutbah.

But this difficulty can easily be resolved by shortening the Arabic Khutbah and by using the time so saved for the lecture in the local language. I have seen that almost in every mosque in India, Pakistan, China, South Africa and in a large number of the mosques in UK, USA and Canada, both the *Khutbah* and a preceding lecture are easily combined within the time officially allowed for the *Jumu'ah* prayer and it has created no difficulty at all. The only requirement for this practice is that the speaker of the additional lecture remains to-the-point, which is advisable otherwise also.

It is sometimes argued that even if the *Khutbah* is delivered in a local language, it is always started by some Arabic words containing *Hamd* (praise to Allah *Subhanahu)* and *Salah* (prayer for Allah's blessing) for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم and at least one verse from the Holy

Qur'an. This much is enough for fulfilling the necessary requirements of a valid Arabic Khutbah. After this necessary requirements, the rest of the Khutbah may be delivered in any language.

But this argument overlooks the point that it is a *Sunnah* that the Arabic Khutbah is followed by the *Jumu'ah* prayer immediately without considerable gap between the two. Therefore, this practice, too, is not in harmony with the masnoon way of delivering a *Khutbah*.

Our brothers who insist that the Friday *Khutbah* must be delivered in a local language are requested to consider the following points in the light of the foregoing discussion:

1. The consistent practice of the Ummah throughout centuries has been to deliver the Friday *Khutbah* in Arabic even in the non-Arab countries. Why should the contemporary Muslims deviate from the consistent practice?

2. *Khutbah* is a part of the *Jumu`ah* prayer, hence a mode of worship. The modes of worship are not open to our rational opinion. They have certain prescribed forms which must permanent act and should never be changed through our rational arguments. Once this door is opened in one form of worship, there is no reason why other forms are not subjected to similar changes. The argument in favor of an Urdu or English *Khutbah* may open the door for an Urdu or English *Adhan* and Salah also on the same analogy. The ways of worship are meant for creating a sense of obedience and submission. A Muslim is supposed to perform these acts as an obedient slave of Allah, without questioning the rationality of these acts, otherwise throwing stones on the Jamarat of Mina or rushing across Safa and Marwah are all apparently irrational acts; but, being the slaves of Allah, we have to perform these acts as modes of worship. This is exactly what the word 'Ibadah' means. Any alteration in these ways on the basis of one's opinion is contrary to the very sense and philosophy of 'Ibadah' or worship.

3. All the recognized schools of Islamic jurisprudence are unanimous on the point that delivering Friday *Khutbah* in Arabic is obligatory. Most of the jurists have gone to the extent that in case the Khutbah is delivered in any other language, no Jumu`ah prayer offered after it is valid. Some others (like Imam Abu Hanifah) hold the non-Arabic Khutbah as valid in the sense that the *Jumu'ah*, prayers offered after it is- not void, yet at the same time they hold this practice to be

impermissible, which means that the impermissibility of a non-Arabic Khutbah is a point of consensus between all the recognized schools of Islamic Fiqh.

A deviation from such a consensus can hardly render a service to the Muslim community except to create differences and disputes between them. It may be seen that practically, this deviation has divided Muslims and their mosques into two groups. Even if it is accepted for the sake of argument that the non-Arabic Khutbah is permissible, it is at the most permissible and not obligatory, and if a permissible act may cause disunity among the Muslims, the greater interest of the Muslim Ummah requires that it should be abandoned. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم , dropped the idea of rebuilding the kabah on Abrahamic foundation merely because it might have created disputes, even though the proposed construction of the kabah was not only permissible, but also advisable. If such a pious act may be avoided for the sake of unity, the newly invented custom of delivering Khutbah in a non-Arabic language deserves all the more to be avoided for maintaining unity.

4. Those who believe that the Khutbah may be delivered in a non-Arabic language do not believe that the Arabic Khutbah is not permissible, while the followers of the four recognized schools of Islamic Fiqh believe that a non-Arabic Khutbah is not permissible. It means that an Arabic Khutbah is permissible according to all, while a non-Arabic Khutbah is not permissible . according to the majority of the Muslims in the world. Obviously, in such a situation, the preferable practice would be the one which is permissible according to all the Muslims, so that every individual may be satisfied that he is performing the required worship in a permissible manner.

Instead of making it a matter of prestige we should mould our ways in accordance with the interest of the Ummah as a whole. May Allah grant us Taufiq to act according to His pleasure.

Although there is no specific *Khutbah* prescribed by the Shari'ah, however, for the sake of convenience, one *Khutbah*, abridged from the *Khutbah* of Maulana Muhammad Isma'il Shaheed is given here just for an example. The second *Khutbah* is taken from the Khutbat compiled by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi:

الخطبة الاولى

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلِيِّ الذَّاتِ عَظِيْمِ الصِّفَاتِ سَمِيِّ السِّمَاتِ كَبِيْرِ الشَّانِ، جَلِيْلِ الْقَدْرِ رَفِيْعِ الذِّكْرِ مُطَاعِ الْاَمْرِ جَلِيِّ الْبُرْهَانِ فَخِيْمِ الْاِسْمِ غَزِيْرِ الْعِلْمِ وَسِيْعِ الْحِلْمِ كَثِيْرِ الْغُفْرَانِ جَمِيْلِ الثَّنَآءِ جَزِيْلِ الْعَطَآءِ مُجِيْبِ الدُّعَآءِ عَمِيْمِ الْاِحْسَانِ ❁ سَرِيْعِ الْحِسَابِ شَدِيْدِ الْعِقَابِ اَلِيْمِ الْعَذَابِ عَزِيْزِ السُّلْطَانِ ❁ وَنَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ لَاشَرِيْكَ لَهٗ فِى الْخَلْقِ وَالْاَمْرِ ❁ وَنَشْهَدُ اَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا وَمَوْلٰنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهٗ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ اَلْمَبْعُوْثُ اِلَى الْاَسْوَدِ وَالْاَحْمَرِ اَلْمَنْعُوْتُ بِشَرْحِ الصَّدْرِ وَرَفْعِ الذِّكْرِ ❁ وَصَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلٰى اٰلِهٖ وَاَصْحَابِهِ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ خُلَاصَةُ الْعَرَبِ الْعَرْبَآءِ، وَخَيْرِ الْخَلَائِقِ بَعْدَ الْاَنْبِيَاءِ

اَمَّا بَعْدُ فَيَآ اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، وَحِّدُوا اللّٰهَ فَاِنَّ التَّوْحِيْدَ رَأْسُ الطَّاعَاتِ ❁ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ فَاِنَّ التَّقْوٰى مِلَاكُ الْحَسَنَاتِ ❁ وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالسُّنَّةِ فَاِنَّ السُّنَّةَ تَهْدِىْ اِلَى الْاِطَاعَةِ ❁ وَمَنْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ رَشَدَ

وَاهْتَدٰى ❁ وَاِيَّاكُمْ وَالْبِدْعَةَ، فَاِنَّ الْبِدْعَةَ تَهْدِيْ اِلَى الْمَعْصِيَةِ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ وَغَوٰى ❁ وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالصِّدْقِ، فَاِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يُنْجِيْ وَالْكِذْبَ يُهْلِكُ ❁ وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالْاِحْسَانِ، فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ❁ اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ادْعُوْنِيْ اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِيْ سَيَدْخُلُوْنَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِيْنَ ❁ بَارَكَ اللّٰهُ لَنَا وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْاٰنِ الْعَظِيْمِ وَنَفَعَنَا وَ اِيَّاكُمْ بِالْاٰيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيْمِ ❁ اَسْتَغْفِرُاللّٰهَ لِيْ وَلَكُمْ وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوْهُ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ .

الخطبة الثانية

اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰهِ اَسْتَعِيْنُهٗ وَاَسْتَغْفِرُهٗ وَنَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شُرُوْرِ اَنْفُسِنَا مَنْ يَّهْدِى اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهٗ ❁ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهٗ ❁ وَاَشْهَدُاَنْ لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَحْدَهٗ لَاشَرِيْكَ لَهٗ وَ اَشْهَدُاَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهٗ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ اَرْسَلَهٗ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيْرًاوَّ نَذِيْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ السَّاعَةِ مَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَقَدْ رَشَدَ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِهِمَا فَاِنَّهٗ لَا يَضُرُّ اِلَّا نَفْسَهٗ وَلَايَضُرُّ اللّٰهَ شَيْئًا ❁ اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ❁ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ، يٰاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا

تَسْلِيمًا ❁ اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ عَبْدِكَ وَرَسُوْلِكَ
وَصَلِّ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُسْلِمِيْنَ
وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَبَارِكْ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّاَزْوَاجِهٖ وَذُرِّيَّتِهٖ ❁
قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اَرْحَمُ اُمَّتِيْ بِاُمَّتِيْ
اَبُوْبَكْرٍ وَاَشَدُّهُمْ فِيْ اَمْرِاللّٰهِ عُمَرُ وَاَصْدَقُهُمْ حَيَآءً
عُثْمَانُ وَاَقْضَاهُمْ عَلِيٌّ وَّفَاطِمَةُ سَيِّدَةُ نِسَآءِ اَهْلِ
الْجَنَّةِ وَالْحَسَنُ وَالْحُسَيْنُ سَيِّدَا شَبَابِ اَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ
وَحَمْزَةُ اَسَدُاللّٰهِ وَاَسَدُ رَسُوْلِهٖ اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِلْعَبَّاسِ
وَوَلَدِهٖ مَغْفِرَةً ظَاهِرَةً وَّبَاطِنَةً لَّاتُغَادِرُ ذَنْبًا ❁ اَللّٰهَ
اَللّٰهَ فِيَّ اَصْحَابِيْ لَاتَتَّخِذُوْهُمْ غَرَضًا مِّنْ بَعْدِيْ
فَمَنْ اَحَبَّهُمْ فَبِحُبِّيْ اَحَبَّهُمْ وَمَنْ اَبْغَضَهُمْ فَبِبُغْضِيْ
اَبْغَضَهُمْ ❁ وَخَيْرُ اُمَّتِيْ قَرْنِيْ ثُمَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ
الَّذِيْنَ يَلُوْنَهُمْ ❁ وَالسُّلْطَانُ ظِلُّ اللّٰهِ فِي الْاَرْضِ
مَنْ اَهَانَ سُلْطَانَ اللّٰهِ فِي الْاَرْضِ اَهَانَهُ اللّٰهُ ❁ اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْاِحْسَانِ وَاِيْتَآءِ ذِي الْقُرْبٰى
وَيَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ، يَعِظُكُمْ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ❁ فَاذْكُرُوْنِيْ اَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوْالِيْ
وَلَا تَكْفُرُوْنَ .

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